United Nations

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Secretary-General predicts further delay in implementation of United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; consultations with parties on technical difficulties necessary.

- Secretary-General says El Salvador negotiations are moving quickly. Parties try to push strongly for moves while Javier Pérez de Cuéllar is still in office.

- Secretary-General is disappointed that Cyprus question remains unresolved after sixteen years of personal involvement; calls on leaders of two communities to reach "long overdue" solution.

- Farewell statement of Secretary-General to staff of United Nations.

- Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves appropriations totalling $2.4 billion for proposed 1992-1993 programme budget.

- FAO Director-General, in year-end message, warns that drop in 1991 harvest threatens global food supplies.

- Trusteeship Council to send fact-finding mission to Palau.

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"A further delay of some months" in the implementation of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is likely, according to Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. He says consultations continue with the parties on differences in the interpretation of the settlement plan for the Territory.

In his report to the Security Council, dated 19 December, the Secretary-General said the issues at hand included the identification of those eligible to vote, the confinement of troops, and the return of refugees and other Saharans living outside the Territory. As was well known, he said, a number of persons who claimed to belong to Western Sahara had been moved into the Territory. The Secretary-General called for the utmost restraint at this

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moment to ensure that the implementation of the plan was not jeopardized by such actions.

In a separate report to the General Assembly on the financing of MINURSO, dated 16 December, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stated that some $58 million had been received so far from United Nations member countries with another $83 million still outstanding in assessed contributions.

With regard to the question of repatriation of refugees organized under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, enough contributions had been received for the repatriation process to begin, the Secretary-General reported.

The Security Council was holding consultations this afternoon on the question of Western Sahara. A formal meeting of the Council was scheduled to follow consultations this evening.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said this morning that the parties in the El Salvador negotiations currently underway in New York were moving "very, very quickly, with great enthusiasm".

His Personal Representative for Central America, Alvaro de Soto, echoed that view saying that the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) were "trying to push very strongly" for moving ahead while the present Secretary-General was still in office.

According to Mr. de Soto, the parties are currently discussing the national civil police, to be created following dissolution of existing security bodies; reduction of armed forces; economic, social and agrarian issues; and political participation by members of the FMLN in the political arena of El Salvador once the cease-fire begins.

In a separate development, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar was asked by correspondents this morning about the recovering of the bodies of two Americans in Lebanon. He said that he expected the bodies to be returned today or tomorrow and that his efforts had mainly concerned Colonel Higgins, a United Nations peace-keeping officer, as well as other bodies of persons from different nationalities.

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The Secretary-General has expressed disappointment by the fact that the Cyprus question, with which he has been personally involved since 1975, has not been resolved. At the same time, he remains encouraged by the conviction that the Turkish and Greek communities in the island will inevitably recognize that a mutually acceptable solution is in their respective self-interest.

The statement was contained in his report to the Security Council, dated 19 December, in which he commended the Council for remaining determined that a

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just and lasting solution should be achieved in Cyprus. The negotiations on a high-level international meeting, which had been postponed because of the change of Government in Turkey, must resume promptly in the new year, he said.

It was important that both sides focus on the establishment of a federal republic. A solution was within reach if all concerned were willing to make their contribution to a compromise solution which would safeguard the legitimate interests and concerns of both communities, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar stated.

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The Secretary-General today said farewell to the staff of the United Nations.

In an address to staff gathered in the General Assembly Hall, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar reflected on the role of the United Nations under his leadership, noting that international peace-keeping had gained new dimensions of peace-making and peace-building. "Our responsibilities are still growing" as the Organization prepares to carry out central roles in the cause of peace in Cambodia, El Salvador, Western Sahara and possibly Angola and Yugoslavia, he said.

Massive staff cuts and reorganizations had resulted in a deterioration of conditions of service, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said, adding that one of his deepest regrets was that the Organization remained in a precarious financial situation despite his efforts.

The Secretary-General believed that even more complex and demanding challenges lay ahead for the Organization. Those challenges, he pointed out, would require a major reappraisal of the way "the house is run". In spite of a positive new era in international relations, the future of the United Nations was by no means clear. Recent global political changes had exposed basic realities including conflict, the actualities of ethnic strife, gross political and economic inequalities, disregard for human rights and environmental threats to the planet.

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Appropriations totalling nearly $2.4 billion were approved for the biennium 1992-1993 this afternoon by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), which recommended that the Assembly appropriate $2,402,578,800 for expenditures and approve income estimates of some 450 million. Total net requirements would be some $2 billion.

The Committee took that action, without a vote, by approving four draft resolutions contained in its report to the General Assembly.

Under the texts, the Assembly would resolve to approve budget appropriations of some $1.2 billion for the year 1992. It would authorize the Secretary-General, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee on

Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), to enter into commitments to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. A Working Capital Fund would be established at $100 million, from which the Secretary-General would be authorized to make certain advances. Should those provisions prove inadequate, he would be authorized to utilize cash from special funds and accounts in his custody, or the proceeds of loans authorized by the Assembly.

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Global food supplies will be fragile in 1992, despite last year's record grain harvest, according to the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Edouard Saouma, in his year-end message on the state of world food and agriculture.

For the first time in eight years, world food production declined by some 1.4 per cent in 1991, due to drought, wars and disruption of production and marketing systems combined. Mr. Saouma warned of growing famine in the Horn of Africa and severe food shortages in parts of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In Iraq, the FAO Director-General cited grave food shortages, food prices 15 to 20 times higher than pre-war levels, serious cases of malnutrition and an increasing number of child deaths.

As 1991 comes to a close, he said, some 500 million people in the world were underfed and 24 nations were experiencing food shortages. The world would enter 1992 once again consuming more than it produces -- food security next year would depend to a large extent on the success or failure of the 1992 harvests.

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The Trusteeship Council has decided to dispatch a visiting Mission to Palau in March to observe conditions in the Territory. Palau is the last portion of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands still under United States administration.

The Council decided during a special session that the two-week visiting mission should be composed of four of its members (China, France, Soviet Union and United Kingdom) and two representatives of the countries of the region. The Council directed the mission to receive petitions, some of which might be examined on the spot, and to submit a report on the visit as soon as practicable.

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